

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils.

Issue 9. Week ending 24/05/20

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives

Up to date information on the Council's response can be found on the SWT website:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/>

SWT Council priorities

Somerset West and Taunton Council's continuing priorities during the Coronavirus outbreak are to:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public; and
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported.

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England](#).

Key Messages this week

1. SWT Leader's Appeal

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts is looking to people to suggest how to "take some good" from the catastrophic coronavirus pandemic. As SWT begins to take small steps towards the recovery period she poses the question of how we want to live once the crisis is past.

"It's important that we build this new future together. People in our council along with others in local and national government are making plans to regenerate the economy. I want to hear from you on how you think we can take some good from this unprecedented time."

Please click [here](#) for the full text of Cllr Smith-Roberts's appeal for input from the public.

Email Cllr.F.Smith-Roberts@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk or send her a [Facebook](#) comment on the Liberal Democrat page to get the conversation started.

2. Committee Meetings

Council AGM

The next virtual Council Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place on Tuesday 26 May at 6.15pm.

To view the webcast please follow the link below:

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=325&MId=2285>

Planning Committee Meeting

The next virtual Planning Committee meeting takes place on Thursday 28 May at 1pm.

Three applications are being considered relating to the areas of Kilve, Minehead and Taunton.

To view the webcast please follow the link below:

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=330&MId=2747>

Public Participation:

The meeting will be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please use the link above. If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting.

Please submit your questions or statements for the Planning Committee by 4pm on Friday 22 May 2020

3. Outdoor tennis courts at Blackbrook Leisure Centre, Taunton, reopened

Following the easing of the Government restrictions, Everyone Active which runs the leisure centres on behalf of SWT reopened the outdoor tennis courts at Blackbrook Leisure centre with new guidelines in place from Monday, 18 May.

Please be aware, you must pre-book and pay for your session online prior to attending. Click [here](#) for the link to Everyone Active.

Everyone Active stated, "Ensuring our customers and colleagues remain safe is our number one priority, so we're implementing several measures to adhere to the Government's social distancing guidelines.

It is extremely important that we all still follow Government advice on social distancing and isolation. Please do not visit the courts if you are unwell or have been advised to stay at home."

Booking is available now, via the Everyone Active app, or you can book your session via the website everyoneactive.com.

4. SWT Public Toilets

The public toilets in Vivary Park and Wellington Park are now open daily from 0800-1800. SWT will review the opening of the remainder of their public toilets going forwards.

5. Key Government Messages

- **Furlough Scheme extended till October**

The Government furlough scheme will be extended to October with workers continuing to receive 80% of monthly wages up to £2,500. New flexibility will be introduced from August, with furloughed workers able to return to work part-time and employers will be asked to pay a percentage towards the salaries of their furloughed staff. Click [here](#) for more information.

- **The UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy**

The Government has now set out its roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions. You can find a summary of the key points affecting Somerset communities and businesses [here](#).

- **Self Employed Income Support Scheme**

The process is being run by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), which has been operating and overseeing loan schemes and the Government's furlough payments.

The Self Employed Income Support Scheme is designed to match the support being given to furloughed employees. The scheme will allow an eligible applicant to claim a taxable grant of 80% of their average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering March, April and May and will be capped at £7,500 altogether. **This is a temporary scheme, but it may be extended.**

For further information, advice or to check if you are eligible to claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, please click [here](#).

6. Spring Bank Holiday Update from Somerset Waste Partnership

For the Spring Bank Holiday, Monday 25 May 2020, household collections (including clinical waste) will be one day later than usual. There will be a collection on Saturday,

30th May. Please note there will be no bulky waste collections or waste container deliveries on Bank Holiday Monday.

All recycling sites are expected to be reopened from Tuesday 26 May and [garden waste collections](#) were resumed on 11 May. There have been changes to the scheduled collection dates, so please refer to the [SWP website](#) to see if these affect you.

All recycling sites will open six days a week: 9am-6pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9am-4pm Saturdays and Sundays; all closed Thursdays. **Access is "one in, one out", a number plate system will be used.**

Please [click here](#) to check for updated list of restrictions before making your journey.

Queue cams at Bridgwater, Chard, Taunton and Yeovil can be viewed [here](#).

To ensure social distancing, protect public and staff and limit numbers, there will be a range of temporary restrictions; queues and delays are likely. Government guidance states visits should only take place if waste cannot be stored safely at home without risking harm or ill-health, or harm to public health and amenity.

7. Business Grants – further call to organisations to apply

As of Monday 18 May, SWT has so far received 3,367 requests for the **Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant** fund and has paid out nearly **£35m** to around 2,920 small local businesses in support of these challenging times – that is 79% of our target.

Organisations are eligible for the grant if the business is in the retail, hospitality and/or leisure sector, and would have qualified for the retail discount on 11 March 2020.

Properties that have benefited from the relief are occupied hereditaments that are wholly or mainly being used:

- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues
- for assembly and leisure e.g. sports grounds, gyms, museums (includes amateur cricket, football and boxing related venues).
- as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation
- for providing services to visiting members of the public e.g. travel agents, estate agents, hairdressers, funeral directors

Government has badged these as business grants whereas there are plenty of rate-payers that are not businesses (like amateur clubs and halls) who are entitled but who may wrongly assume the grants aren't for them. Community Facilities which don't consider themselves "businesses" may also qualify, even if they are nil rated. SWT Councillors and officers have been trying to contact these premises to advise the rate-payer of their eligibility, following up on emails and letters where SWT hold the relevant details.

Although our offices are closed our staff are working from home to ensure we get payment out to eligible businesses as soon as possible. Generally cases are being passed for payment within seven working days from receipt of the required information.

SWT is still trying to reach out to those businesses that are yet to apply for a grant by a variety of means. For further information about accessing the business grants available, please [click here](#).

Additional funding announcement

On Friday 1 May the Government announced that they will be providing Councils with [additional funding](#) to enable them to provide financial support to small businesses which don't qualify for Small Business Fund and Retail Hospitality and Leisure Fund grant payments.

SWT are waiting for details of how much funding will be given to them as well as more detailed information in relation to this announcement. Once this is known, SWT will create an application process and promote its availability.

For more information or to submit a grant request, please [click here](#). The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice and Information page of our [website](#) also contains the latest links to wider advice, support and guidance for businesses. For more information and to sign up for the newsletter, please visit www.visitsomerset.co.uk/business

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC)

Public Rights of Way remain open ahead of vegetation cut

SCC is continuing to ensure that any path safety issues are investigated and resolved as soon as possible during the coronavirus emergency.

Public rights of way within Somerset have remained open during the lockdown, with path users advised to follow the Countryside Code and Public Health England guidance regarding social distancing.

The 2020 vegetation cutting programme is now underway and focuses on the paths that are most popular and are prone to becoming overgrown. Keeping vegetation under control is all part of keeping the path network safe to use and is achieved through a proactive programme using various contractors and volunteers. This programme is largely proceeding as normal.

To read the press release in full, please [click here](#).

SCC Highways

Major Schemes Update

In last week's newsletter SCC reported on two major road closures that were being put in place to allow the resurfacing of two important footways in **Williton**: Long Street on the **A39 Bridgwater Road** and High Street on the **A358 Taunton Road**.

As readers may know, these are particularly difficult locations to work at due to the volumes of traffic running along them. However, SCC has managed to take advantage of the current quieter road conditions to bring these two schemes forward in the programme. Long Street was completed this week on Thursday 21 May, a day earlier than planned. Next week they will be working at High Street and the A358 Taunton Road will be closed to through traffic between 07:30am and 5pm on Tuesday 26, Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 May.

Meanwhile in **Wellington**, SCC have been resurfacing **B3187 High Street**. This has been under cover of evening road closures between 6:30pm and 11:30pm. The work is scheduled to be completed on the evening of Friday 29 May. The surfacing crew will then move on to other roads across the county before returning to **A358 Staplegrove Road** for two weeks of evening road closures starting on 8 June.

As regards to other works, **Church Street, Timberscombe** will be closed on Tuesday 26 May for three weeks to carry out drainage improvement work near Beasley Farm. The new footway at **A358 Cross Keys, Norton Fitzwarren** (a Small Improvement Scheme, SIS) is progressing well with the works being protected by temporary traffic signals.

For more information on maintenance works and to stay up to date, visit the SCC Highways website www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

SCC Highways are grateful for the continued support of the public whilst they undertake these necessary works.

M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme

Toneway

Toneway has moved at pace and is substantially complete with some minor works to street lighting and signage outstanding. The final surfacing will be installed during overnight road closures later in the year to coincide with the final surfacing of the gyratory. The current traffic management layout was scheduled to be removed on the evening of the 18 May and from 19 May should resemble the pre-construction layout. This layout will remain until the construction company, Alun Griffiths has completed the additional lane at the gyratory.

J25 Gyratory

Installation of the concrete vehicle barrier to the outer gyratory has been completed and the inner gyratory concrete vehicle barrier was due for installation on 18 & 19 May. Works will continue within all areas which will include excavations, sub-base, installation, kerbing works along with installation of the new traffic signal ducting.

New Nexus 25 Roundabout

The excavation works has been completed to allow the construction of the tank base. Installation of the precast concrete tank was scheduled to commence on the 18 May.

Drone Footage

Alun Griffiths' latest drone footage is available on their project pages at the Griffiths in the Community website. Please [click here](#) to view the drone footage.

Subscribe to Newsletters and Updates by Alun Griffiths

If you would like to subscribe to receive future Newsletters and Bulletins, please [click here](#) and complete the online form for Mail Chimp.

Advice from Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Summer Safety – Please be responsible when disposing of your litter/BBQ

Now that the lockdown is easing and there is more freedom of movement, DSFRS are asking for people to be mindful about summer safety, especially with regard to the use of BBQs and the risk of heathland fire. Due to a lot of hospitality venues being closed, it is natural that people will want to feed themselves but the fire brigade are advising that people "picnic" with sandwiches, rather than use BBQs which can be difficult to dispose of safely.

[Minehead Fire Station](#) got called to an incident at 15:00 hrs on the 18 May, when a scrub and heathland fire was reported on North Hill, Minehead. On arrival crews discovered fire involving tree scrub and heathland. The second appliance from Minehead was requested to supply additional water due to fire spread into larger branches from fallen trees.

On investigating the scene, the crew discovered a discarded disposable BBQ.

BBQs on heathland are really bad news and can lead to large fires requiring many resources. This would be frustrating at the best of times, but during the current social distancing measures, it puts crews at additional risk for a completely unavoidable incident.

Please do not use BBQs on heathland or near any vegetation.

To prevent grass and forest fires be mindful of the following:

- Never throw cigarette ends out of a car window - they could start a fire and ruin surrounding countryside.
- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodlands. Sunlight shining through glass can start a fire.

- Take your litter home or put it in a waste or recycling bin.

If you discover a fire:

- Do not be tempted to investigate.
- Leave the area as quickly as possible and call 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade.
- Do not return unless the Fire Service tells you that it is safe to do so.

Please see the attached information leaflet on how to be BBQ safe.

Community Support – What help is out there?

The Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

The

Somerset Coronavirus Appeal has now grown to over £615,000 since its launch on Thursday 19 March [*correct as at 07/05/2020*].

It is managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) and continues to raise money to fund local charities and community organisations supporting those in most urgent need during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and donations have come from local individuals, charitable trusts and businesses.

Nearly £300,000 of grants have now been awarded to almost 130 groups across the county, including foodbanks and food delivery schemes, support services for older people, and virtual counselling, with more funding going out every week.

You can explore an interactive [map](#) which shows the grants that have been awarded, the different types of projects they are funding, and gives a sense of how donations have been focused in the most affected communities.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available and to apply, groups need to complete a short application form via: www.somersetcf.org.uk/coronavirus.

You are invited to [click here](#) if you wish to make a donation to the appeal.

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

SWT is publishing an e-newsletter to support the phenomenal positive response and work of the voluntary and community sector across our district.

Please share this with all you contacts and encourage people to [subscribe](#).

If you know of a group in your ward who may benefit or have something to contribute then please send them our dedicated email; VCSNewsletter@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Let's Get West Somerset Moving Again

Somerset charity CCS is calling on the generosity of people in the West Somerset area to donate their second-hand bikes that they no longer need and would rather see being kept in use, to help get West Somerset moving again – safely.

Social distancing and scaled-back public transport is making it difficult for people, especially those on low incomes, to travel to work or take up a new job when they have no affordable way of getting there. After being lovingly refurbished by an expert mechanic, the bikes will be supplied to local residents who would struggle financially to purchase a new bike.

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

Emergency Prepayment Meter Top Ups

The Centre for Sustainable Energy has a small fund available for emergency fuel top ups for prepayment meters. If you or someone you know has run out of credit on their meter and has not got the money to top it up, please contact Lucy Betts, via mobile 07498575847, or the advice line at the Centre for Sustainable Energy on 08000822234. Open Monday to Friday 9am-6pm.

They can issue voucher codes which can be taken to pay point or post offices. They also have a few volunteers to take keys if needed. They also have some Surviving Winter Fund money left too if of use.

For further information, please [click here](#).

Health and Welfare

Mental Health Awareness Week 18 – 24 May 2020

This week the Mental Health Foundation launched their Mental Health Awareness Week campaign and the theme is kindness. Please take a look at their [website](#) for lots more tips and advice. Be kind.

Being mentally healthy doesn't just mean that you don't have a mental health problem.

If you're in good mental health, you can:

- make the most of your potential
- cope with life
- play a full part in your family, workplace, community and among friends.

Some people call mental health 'emotional health' or 'well-being' and it's just as important as good physical health.

[Click here](#) to access a range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health. You will find podcasts, videos, inspiring stories and information about getting help if you're struggling.

What can you do for Mental Health Awareness Week?

You can download a [Mental Health Awareness Week supporter pack](#) - filled with lots of fun and exciting ways to support during the week.

[Click here](#) to sign up to receive monthly copies of the Mental Health Foundation's newsletter. You will also receive occasional bulletins and information about how you can support their work.

Quote of Kindness:

"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind". Henry James

New online portal available for coronavirus testing

Coronavirus is still circulating in Somerset so it is vital that people stay alert and self-isolate – with their household - if they develop symptoms.

The Government recently added a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste as a symptom. Therefore, the main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are now:

- High temperature - you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- New, continuous cough - you're coughing a lot for more than an hour, (or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste - you've noticed that you can't smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal.

Most people with coronavirus (COVID-19) have at least one of these symptoms.

For advice about what to do if you have any of these symptoms, ring 111, or [use the 111 online coronavirus \(COVID-19\) service](#).

If you have the symptoms and you want to get tested, go through the new NHS portal to arrange a test. Please [click here](#) to go to the website

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am – 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments
- Waste collection and disposal

- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online.

Please refer to the websites below for the latest advice, help and guidance:

Links to the most up to date Government guidance as of 12 May 2020.

- [Staying safe outside your home](#)
- [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#)
- [Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

Public Health England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

[Help to protect yourself and your community - Public Health England](#)

NHS – Help and Advice

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS website](#)

[Advice about staying at home - NHS website](#)

FAQS

Q. I'm secretary of my local cricket club. I am been encouraged to apply for the business rate grant, but we are nil-rated (don't have to pay a yearly bill). Is there any point in applying?

A. Yes. Providing your cricket club is not a parish council owned facility, and the cricket club is listed as the liable party on the bill, there is every chance your organisation is eligible. SWT is encouraging as many sports and leisure clubs to apply.

Q. Now that restrictions are easing, what leisure activities are available to me and my family?

A. Sports, such as tennis and golf, where social distancing is possible can now be accessed so long sessions are pre-booked online. Unfortunately, play areas and high rope activities are still unavailable at this time. Please continue to check online regarding availability as/when Government guidelines are updated.

Q. How do I report concerns around congregations and gatherings of people to the Police?

A. **COVID-19 breach of restrictions:** If you have concerns about individuals or a business breaching Government restrictions you can report it online [here](#).

Incidents reported on the online form will not be attended to immediately.
Alternatively ring Avon and Somerset Police on 101 (for non-emergencies) or 999 (for emergencies)

Avon and Somerset Police (A&SP)

Spotlight on New Government Guidelines

- The Government has expanded the list of reasonable excuses to leave home, meaning **individuals can spend unlimited time outdoors**.
- The following still represent **regulation breaches**:
 - Visiting holiday homes or second homes;
 - Visiting homes (and gardens) of friends/family
 - Gatherings of three or more people from different households in public areas
 - Individuals may now meet with **ONE member of a different household** in an outdoor public space, whilst socially distancing.

Impact of new Guidelines on Policing

- **Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce:**
Officers will continue to apply the four E's. Enforcement is always a last resort.
- Officers will **continue to patrol as usual** and will approach members of the public who aren't complying with the regulations.
- **Increase in fines.** Those not adhering to regulations could face **£100 fine**, doubled on each repeat offence.

Don't survive lockdown only to become a different kind of statistic.

Kill your speed, don't let your speed kill you.

With the gradual relaxing of lockdown restrictions, police forces throughout the UK will be stepping up activity from May 25 to June 7 to remind motorists of the importance of travelling at a safe speed and within the speed limit.

You can follow A&SP on Twitter @ASPRoadSafety #SlowDownSaveLives

Finally

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the government](#).

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter @swtcouncil
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.

#StayAlert #Controlthevirus #SaveLives

Attachment:

BBQ Safety